

WINTER, 1983

ILLINOIS NUMISMATIC ASS'N COIN DIGEST



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March — 3rd Sunday: Kankakee Coin Club, Kankakee

April — Last weekend (two days): Mattoon Coin Club, Mattoon

May — 1st Saturday: Corn Belt Coin Club, Bloomington

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October — 3rd Sunday: Kankakee Coin Club, Kankakee

October — 3rd Sunday: McHenry County Coin Club, Crystal Lake

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The Drake Hotel Robbery Medals

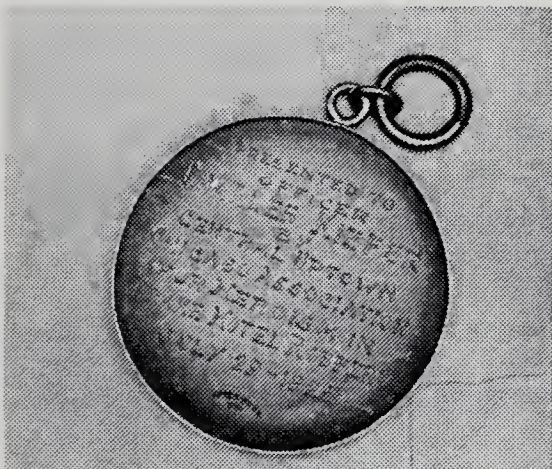
by Fred J. Borgmann

A couple of years ago when gold and silver prices skyrocketed and the smelting madness which overtook the country destroyed countless historical artifacts, the loss of which may never be fully appreciated, a gold medal and suspension brooch was sold to a coin and bullion dealer as scrap gold. Fortunately the dealer had enough of a conscience and common sense to forego an immediate profit and saved the medal for posterity.

The medal is gold, 36.45 mm in diameter, weighs 15.20 grams and is of three piece construction. The round cast planchet has a female figure mounted on the obverse side and has a gold strip 3 mm in width mounted around the edge, giving the medal a very high protective edge. The three ring suspension is mounted at the top on this gold strip. The edge, shield and wreath are highly polished, while the rest of the medal has an antique finish.

Obverse: an allegorical female figure seated on a shield engraved with the initials "CK." She holds a laurel wreath in her extended left hand.

Reverse: engraved "Presented to Officer Charles Kiefer by Central Uptown Chicago Association for Heroism in Drake Hotel Robbery July 29, 1925." At the very bottom in small letters is "Spies Bros., Chi."

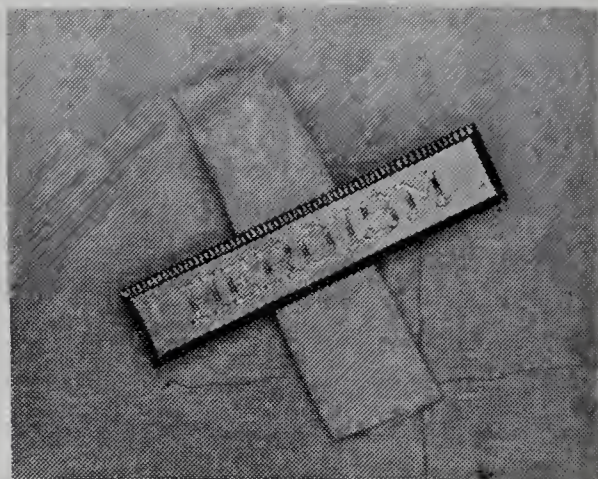
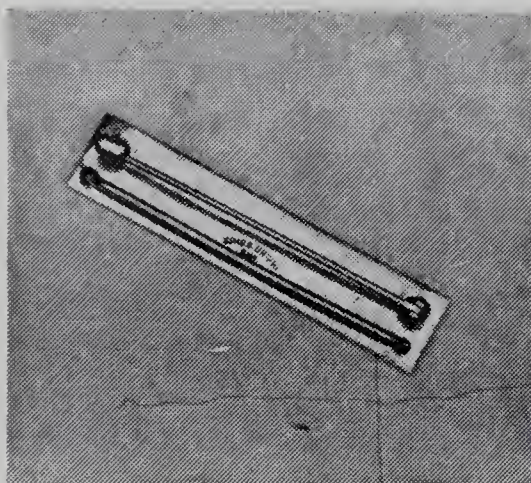


The brooch is gold, 28 x 8.2 mm and weighs 4.49 grams. The face has 1 mm wide milling along the rim framing the engraved word "Heroism." The back has a pin and catch above a ribbon bar and is hallmarked "Spies Bros. Chi. Solid Gold." Ironically, since federal law by this time required gold items to have their gold content clearly marked in karat weight, this medal and the seven others like it which were awarded to policemen were technically illegal.

Ribbon: After all my research, which included contacting the current owner of the Spies Brothers firm, no record regarding the ribbon or even the medal could be found. Blue would be my guess for the ribbon color.

In our bureaucratic society one would think some record would be available concerning this medal and the reason for it's existence. Spies Brothers Jewelers have no record that old. The Central Uptown Chicago Assn. no longer exists. Chicago Police Department records, if they exist, cannot be found. The Drake Hotel has no knowledge of such a robbery ever having taken place, and they just had a history of the hotel done by a public relations firm for their 60th anniversary. Therefore, what follows is based on newspaper accounts (some-time contradictory) from the Chicago Tribune and the Chicago Daily News.

The robbers were: Erik Nelson, a former waiter in the hotel restaurant, who is credited with planning the robbery; Ted Court, who a few weeks earlier shot and killed a policeman while robbing the Pantheon Theater (both Nelson and Court were shot and killed by police while fleeing the hotel); Joseph Holmes and Jack Wilson (both captured, tried, convicted and hung in the Cook County Jail on February 13, 1926); and William Marks, alias Mullneschuck (who seems to have made good his escape with most of the stolen money).



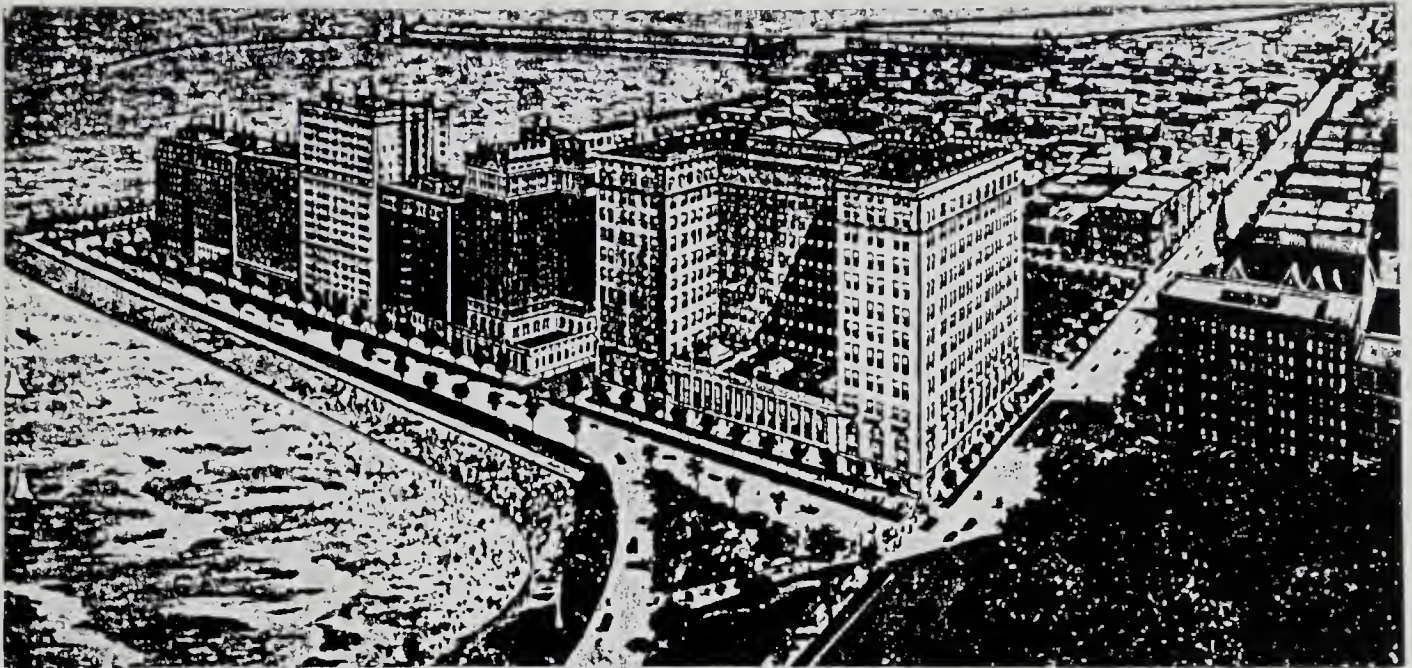
The robbery began about 3:30 p.m. on July 29, 1925 when the bandits parked their stolen light green Cadillac on Lake Shore Drive. Then they entered the Drake Hotel from the north through the Lake Shore Drive entrance. Once inside, the bandits immediately went to the second floor administration offices with Nelson leading the way. As soon as they were beyond the busy lobby, the bandits put on their masks and drew their weapons. Wilson had a sawed off double barrel shotgun and the rest had an assortment of pistols. At this point it should also be noted that the bandits had been drinking since the morning and at least one of them, Holmes, was wildly drunk. Upon entering the enclosure which the executive offices and cashier cages faced.

Wilson and Marks walked in front of the cages, while Nelson and Court hurried to the rear of the cages. Meanwhile, Holmes went into the large clerical room behind the cages, lined up two men and three women employees and relieved them of their watches and some of their jewelry. One of the women managed to slip her diamond engagement ring under her tongue unnoticed by Holmes, who then took mercy on her and let her keep her remaining friendship ring.

While the other bandits were looting the cages, rejecting sacks of coins in favor of paper money, Holmes was marching his prisoners back and forth through several unoccupied offices in military fashion swearing and cursing continually. Holmes, however, had marched his parade once too often and one of the women kicked a door shut in his face! The now furious Holmes fired several shots through the locked door and then ran out into the hall in order to circle around and get into the other room with his frightened prisoners. As he made the run, he collided with a returning secretary knocking her back down the flight of stairs she had just came up.

In spite of her resulting injuries, the secretary rushed to the assistant manager who telephoned the house detective, James McMurdie, telling him of the robbery in progress. Upon returning to the clerical office, Holes saw the head clerk, Frank Rodkey, seated at his desk as ordered and still grinning from watching the humorous marching scene. "I'll wipe that grin from your

face," Holmes told the clerk, and then shot him point blank in the abdomen, mortally wounding him.



By this time, the bandits, with the exception of Holmes, fled down the corridor through which they came, passing by the door of the house detective's office. Having received the phone call and hearing the shooting, McMurdie opened his door a crack and shot at the bandits as they passed by, hitting Court in the shoulder. The bandits then began running and McMurdie fired several more shots after them. Wilson returned the fire with his shotgun, but apparently slid his hand too far down the short barrel and blew off part of his left thumb.

Holmes meanwhile ran down the back (kitchen) stairs and half the way down met an assistant steward and a coffee boy, both on their way up. Holmes yelled, "Stick 'em up!", and the shocked steward slipped, fell and rolled down the stairs leaving the coffee boy behind him with his hands raised high above his head. While Holmes shoved the boy into a pantry, a kitchen clerk who had heard what was going on ran outside and called to Police Officers Clarence Dalof and John Kelly, who were directing traffic. The officers entered the hotel and confronted Holmes, who then shot Officer Dalof in the hand was clubbed unconscious by Officer Kelly before he could fire another shot.

Meanwhile, at the front of the hotel the remaining bandits ran through the lobby and came out onto the sidewalk. Nelson, Marks and the self-wounded Wilson made it back to their car. The drunk and wounded Court, however, went to the wrong car. At this moment two other police officers, Patrick Hannigan and Walter Noonan (Noonan was off duty) who, when they saw Officers Kelly and Dalof run to the rear of the hotel, instinctively started for the front, came around the corner just in time to see the bandits running for their car.

Court, who was still trying to get into the wrong car, saw them coming and started shooting. Officer Hannigan returned the fire and killed Court just as Officer Peter Annen grabbed Court's arm. Officer Annen joined the chase from his corner on Oak Street and came up behind Court unseen. This action gave the remaining bandits enough time to get away in their Cadillac. Since the car was parked facing east, the bandits had to drive east, turning south at the next corner and then turning west on Walton. From Walton, they turned north on Michigan to Lake Shore Drive, driving furiously towards Lincoln Park after having made a complete circuit around the Drake Hotel. The speeding Cadillac entered Lincoln Park taking the inner boulevard of Stockton Drive,

with its many sharp turns, forcing dozens of cars to take evasive action. Their luck ran out at the Center Street intersection when they crashed into a Jewett sedan containing several women who fled at the sight of all the guns.

The three bandits then abandoned their Cadillac. Marks and the wounded Wilson calmly walked south for one block and then hailed a Yellow Cab, directing the driver to the corner of Winthrop and Argyle. From there they walked to Mark's rented room, where Wilson tried to bandage his thumb and they split up the portion of the stolen money that Marks was carrying. After this, the two split up. Wilson left his money with the owner of Cozzi's Restaurant for safe keeping. Cozzi in turn called a Dr. Chesroy, who had Wilson taken to the Jefferson Park Hospital where he was treated and eventually arrested later that evening. Marks seems to have made good his escape and as of mid-September, 1925 had not been captured.

The third bandit in the wrecked Cadillac was Nelson. Nelson, with his pistol in hand, attempted to commandeer a Chrysler touring car but the frightened driver killed the engine and Nelson couldn't get it started again. Nelson then commandeered a passing Yellow Cab with a woman passenger. Nelson jumped into the back knocking the woman to the floor, shoved his gun against the drivers back, ordered him to drive north and to "drive like hell." South-bound Police Officer Arthur Wingren saw what was happening, commandeered a Marmon Sedan and gave chase while standing on the running board. As the chase moved north along Sheridan Road through the various intersections, Officer Wingren signaled to the traffic officers to join in the pursuit.

Officer John Broacker joined the chase at Diversey Parkway and Officer Charles Kiefer joined in at Irving Park Blvd. Both commandeered cars. During the chase, Officer Wingren gave up the slow Harmon he was riding and commandeered a Bauer Cab. The chase must have been quite a sight; cars weaving in and out of the heavy rush hour traffic with policemen on the runningboards occasionally exchanging gun shots with Nelson in his fleeing cab. North on Clark Street, Nelson's cab driver slowed down preparing to jump out when Nelson leaned forward and hit him on the back of the head with his pistol. The driver went sprawling head-long into the street, leaving the cab out of control to crash head on into a trolley car near Carmen Avenue. Nelson jumped out of the cab, ran on foot along Winona Avenue and then turned into an alley, with Officers Broecker and Kiefer hot on his heels. (Officer Wingren had stopped to reload his gun.)

Nelson ducked into a basement entrance at 1454 Foster Avenue. Officer Broecker, close behind him, used his empty gun to club Nelson on the head. When Officer Kiefer ran up, Nelson and Officer Broecker were grappling with a gun between them. Nelson, now in control of the gun and not knowing it was empty, was trying to point it at Officer Broecker's chest. Officer Kiefer, seeing an immediate threat to Officer Broecker's life, fired one shot through Nelson's head, killing him instantly.

For their actions in pursuit of the Drake Hotel robbers, the eight policemen named in this account were awarded gold medals just like Officer Kiefer's medal. Each medal had the recipient's initials engraved on the shield and their names included in the legend on the back. In addition, each officer won the \$100 Chicago Tribune Police Heroism Award.

Officer Kiefer must have had an interesting career. As early as August 7, 1917 he and a lifeguard saved two girls from drowning in Lake Michigan. On March 12, 1932 Sargeant Kiefer was shot and wounded during a Communist

Drake Heroes Win Tribune Awards



Walter Noonan



Arthur Wingren



John Broecker



Peter Annen



Clarence Dalof



Patrick Hannigan



Charles Kiefer



John Kelly

instigated anti-Japanese riot. On March 30, 1933 Sargeant Kiefer and his team won the Lincoln Park Board Team Revolver Shooting Trophy. Sargeant Kiefer died December 13, 1942 at 56 years of age, leaving a wife and four children. It is kind of a sad thought to think that one of them or their children would have sold his medal for scrap.

Finally, special thanks are due Miss L. K., for without her many long hours spent searching through reels of micro filmed newspapers this article might never have been written, and to Chicago Police Officer Thomas A. Molyneaux, who went out of his way to help me gain access to some very interesting scrap books.

Editor's Note: Fred Borgmann is a numismatic editor with Krause Numismatic Publications of Iola, Wisconsin.

ABOUT DUES

A new year brings dues notices to my house; maybe to yours too. Dues have NOT been increased — still \$3.00 a year for old members; \$4.00 for the first year for new members. Please get your dues in as soon as possible.

I hope you will have some left over after paying the tax man. We have a lot of membership cards, so don't be afraid to sign up a new ILLNA member.

HOW ABOUT ADIEU ?

The next issue of the **Digest** will be handled by Dale Lukanich, Mark Wieclaw and Mike Hurley. They are young men with some new and fresh ideas. I know they will do a good job for the association. To correspond with them, write: Dale P. Lukanich, 409 Dixon Avenue, Joliet, Illinois 60435.

I have served as a board member or officers (president 1968-69) since ILLNA was formed in 1959. At the 1983 show in Peoria, my office (secretary) will be open. I will have then served 24 years. I would like very much to step down. Surely someone would like to take over as secretary.

I retired a little over two and one-half years ago and think now I'll have all the free time I need — wrong! I am writing a book that I have become a slave to, research articles that demand time, and two grand children that I don't see often enough; not to mention an invitation to spend some winter time in Florida and with my sister in California.

My library needs to be completely re-cataloged (a full winter's job); so someone help me running for the job of secretary of ILLNA.

— Jimmy

TO PROMOTE EXHIBITING

The Board of Governors has a new program to become effective immediately. The officers of IILNA are greatly concerned about the drop in participation of numismatic exhibitors on all levels. For some years now, the exhibits have been on the lean side — at ANA in Boston (1982), about 100 exhibits. Central States has had a very poor showing the past few years; Illinois and Indiana have been having ten to fifteen exhibits each year. Most local clubs do poorly; one exception is the Joliet Coin Club — each year they come up with 15 to 20 exhibits. A few clubs have dropped exhibiting for any one of several reasons.

ILLNA will give any member club of the association a check in the amount of \$25.00 to be used to purchase exhibit trophies. We sincerely hope this offer will be taken advantage of by all clubs. Your club can have good displays if you will push the issue a little at your monthly club meetings. Write to the secretary of ILLNA stating club name and date of show.

1983 DUES

ENCLOSED IN THIS "DIGEST" IS A NOTICE OF YOUR 1983 DUES !

YOUR ATTENTION TO THIS MATTER WILL BE APPRECIATED !

— Jimmy

CORRECTION — The "Lottery" article which appeared in the Winter, 1982 issue of the COIN DIGEST was written by Samuel W. Johnson, Jr., instead of someone named 'Thomas', as was printed. The editor regrets this error.

My Price Was 107 Bucks or Dollars

by Samuel W. Johnson, Jr.

Hello, friends and fellow collectors. How often have you heard the following statements or something very similar? (Many times?) “Hey, pal. Loan me 10 bucks until payday.” “I’ll bet ya’ 20 bucks that the Dodgers beat the Yankees in the World Series.” “Some professional athletes make a million bucks a year.”

Do you know why some of us say “bucks” instead of dollars? The author conducted several mini-surveys and asked more than 100 people just why we says bucks instead of dollars. One survey was conducted at the 1981 Illinois State Convention. Others were conducted at the local pool hall, the author’s place of work, and at the 1982 Chicago International Coin Fair.

The results of these surveys were nearly identical in that a large majority of people and numismatists did not know why they used the term “bucks.” Less than 12 percent were able to give the correct answer! This gave the author added incentive to write this educational article.

This article features a documented true story and an unquestionable reference as to why many of us say bucks instead of dollars. Although four accounts of the story revealed some differences, the basic facts were nearly identical. Eventually, all information in this article was gleaned from the documented actual records. Here is the story.

History reveals that George Rogers Clark and his 150 to 180 man “army”, nicknamed “The Long Knives”, won possession of the Illinois Territory from the British in the years 1778-79. (The nickname of this army came from the fact that each man carried a very large knife for possible hand-to-hand combat.) The men in this army were “hand picked” by Clark for their skill with weapons, their endurance, and physical strength. Nearly all were expert riflemen and, friends, you would not have wanted to “knife fight” with any of them. Many of these men were experienced Indian fighters and ex-revolutionary soldiers.

The Long Knives were highly respected and feared by Indians, settlers, and British and French soldiers. Bluntly stated, the army was a collection of very tough men. “Man for man” it was a highly efficient force in 1778. The majority of these soldiers obviously would have been “green berets” in today’s army.

When traveling with Clark, quite a few of these soldiers liked the southwestern Illinois territory. After their military service was over, as many as 40 of them returned to make their home in this area. One of their first settlements, started about April of 1782, was near a large fresh water spring named “La Belle Fontaine.” (The French translation is “the beautiful fountain.”) This spring is located a few hundred yards south of present day Waterloo, Illinois, in Monroe County, and about 25 miles south of St. Louis’ Gateway Arch.

Many years after its formation, this early settlement was harrassed by Indians. One incredibly spectacular experience concerned a man named William Biggs. Highly regarded at age 23, Biggs had served as a Lieutenant in Clark’s army. He returned in 1784 to settle near La Belle Fontaine. In this new land, Biggs spent the next few years trying to make a good life for his wife and children.



This 10 foot diameter pool of water is La Belle Fontaine in the year 1982. The large sunken barrell in the center of the pool is the mouth of the spring. Noted on maps of the early 1700's as "a great spring," it obviously still is! Unable to properly measure the flow of the water, the author estimates it at several thousand gallons per day because a small ever-flowing creek is created. Clark and his army undoubtedly drank water here when traveling from Kaskaskia to Cahokia.

On March 27, 1788 Biggs and a friend named John Vallis had decided to go to Cahokia (Illinois) and sell or trade many beaver skins that they had accumulated. About 7:00 a.m. that morning, only about five miles north of La Belle Fontaine, the two men were casually riding along on their horses when suddenly they heard two rifle shots: Both men looked to their right because it sounded as if that was where the shots originated. Seeing nothing, the men cautiously rode on. (Both concluded that hunters were in the area.)

A short distance ahead, as they rode into a woods, Biggs looked to his left and saw a blood curdling sight. Sixteen Indians were standing side-by-side about 40 yards away. All had rifles pointed at the two men, and their fingers were on the triggers.



Noted Waterloo historian Mr. Alfred Meuller is standing near a remnant of the old road. Barely skirting La Belle Fontaine, this is the road Biggs and Vallis traveled the fateful morning of March 27, 1788. Only about five miles north of this spot is where the two men encountered the sixteen armed Indians.

Biggs shouted an alarm to Vallis and both men leaned down low on their horse's mane. As they began to whip their horses into a sprint, all of the Indians fired nearly in unison. What followed, obviously, was a hail of very

accurate rifle fire. Because Biggs and his horse were nearest to the Indians (somewhat shielding Vallis and his mount), his horse was hit with at least four bullets. As many as five more bullets pierced the large heavy coat Biggs was wearing.

Unbelievably and miraculously Biggs was not wounded! (The bullets had pierced his coat in such places as the baggy sleeves, the large collar, and the part that hung down by his legs.) His fatally wounded horse "reared up" and then began to step sideways. All of the Indians had laid their rifles down and, screaming and shouting, with upraised tomahawks were charging toward Biggs. During this time, Biggs and his saddle slid off of the horse. His rifle slipped off of his shoulder to the ground. (Riding a fast horse, John Vallis quickly escaped.)

Biggs' horse then began to uncontrollably sprint with Biggs desperately holding onto the horse's mane. Repeatedly, he tried to get back on the horse but could not. After about 30 yards, Biggs let go of the mane, fell to the ground and began running. At this point, the Indians were within 15 yards. (Biggs' horse ran 600 yards and fell dead.) Biggs took off running like he was 'shot out of a cannon.' In the foot race that followed, Biggs badly outran the Indians for the first few hundred yards. In fact, twelve of the sixteen Indians quickly gave up the chase.

However, after about 400 yards, the other four Indians caught him. Stunningly, the first to catch him made no attempt to kill him. Instead, this Indian rubbed the handle of his tomahawk from Biggs' shoulder down to his hand. This act signified to the other Indians that Biggs was not to be killed.

(Author's notation: Biggs would later write in a letter (actual quote), "I run about foure hundred yards before they catched me and I belive I should a cleared ought frome them if I had not bin so heavy cloathed." You must excuse the mis-spelled words, friends! In 1788, this was A- English on the frontier.)

It is unclear why the Indians didn't kill Biggs. Badly outnumbering him, they could have done so because Biggs was unarmed. Perhaps they were amazed that he was not wounded in their hail of rifle fire. Perhaps, because Biggs was such a large man (estimated 6' 8" tall, more or less, and 200 pounds plus) they wished to later "show off" by saying, "Look at the huge white man we captured." Biggs certainly may have been one of the largest men that the Indians had ever seen! It is obvious that the Indians originally intended to kill him. Just why they didn't remains a mystery.

Riding a beautiful elegant horse, which was not wounded, John Vallis escaped. However, Vallis was painfully and seriously wounded in the upper thigh. When the four Indians captured Biggs, Vallis had "doubled back" and was only 100 yards away. His horse snorting and prancing on the road, Vallis, with rifle in his hand, observed the scene. Although armed, there are two obvious reasons why Vallis did not interfere. First, he probably was unable to attack because of his wound. Second, he saw that Biggs had not been killed and obviously did not want to further endanger his friend's life.

A few minutes later, when he reached "Piggotts Fort," the nearly unconscious Vallis had to be lifted from his horse and carried to a bed. That Vallis waited for Biggs under these conditions, was definitely a heroic act! Vallis, who had also served as a Long Knife, certainly was a true friend of Biggs. Sadly, these two men were never to see each other again! Because of his wound, John Vallis died six weeks later (probably of infection and gangrene.)

When Vallis reached the fort, a small cannon was fired to alert nearby settlers that Indians were in the area. This scared the Indians who had captured Biggs, and they immediately began a hurried march to their village in Indiana, covering about six miles in the next hour. (Another actual quote from the previously mentioned letter that Biggs wrote: "We run in a pretty smart trot of a run of four or six miles.")

Biggs' hands had been tied behind his back and, with a rope around his neck, was pulled along and forced to keep up with this fast pace. In this era it was common knowledge that if Indian prisoners could not keep pace they would be killed. There were no exceptions to this rule!

However, as a member of Clark's army Biggs had previously traveled long distances on foot, sometimes going several days with very little or no food. (Have any of you ever tried running or jogging with your hands tied behind your back? Of course not, but it is very difficult because your balance is impaired.) Even under these conditions, Biggs kept pace!

By 10:00 p.m. that night, the group had traveled about 40 miles. Below is a dramatic account of Biggs' experience during the trip to Indiana. (Remember, the group was on foot!) First day - covered about 40 miles; no food. Second day - covered about 35 miles; no food. Third day - covered about 30 miles; no food. Fourth day - covered about 25 miles; Indians killed a large, fat duck and roasted it, which Biggs totally devoured! Biggs had traveled about 130 miles with nothing to eat! This has to be one of the most incredible displays of physical endurance ever recorded.

Fifth day - covered about 30 miles; no food. Biggs slept very little this night. His arms, legs, hands, and feet were badly swollen and inflamed from being tied up each night. Sixth day - covered about 30 miles; no food. Seventh day - covered about 25 miles; Indians killed a deer, ample food. Another 85 miles without anything to eat! Eighth day - covered about 25 miles; no food. Ninth day - covered about 15 miles; reached Indian hunting camp. Plenty of meat, hominy, and sugar to eat. The group was very hungry and (quote) "ate like hungry dogs." They had covered 255 miles in eight and one-half days.

(Author's notation: Several days during the trip, the Indians made "soup" of various items. But, because the Indians cut up and added partially uncleaned intestines of animals, Biggs wouldn't eat any of it. This "soup" had an unusual green color. Can you blame him for not eating?) However, Clark certainly made no mistake judging Biggs ten years before. Biggs had to possess tremendous physical and mental strength. His endurance was almost beyond belief!

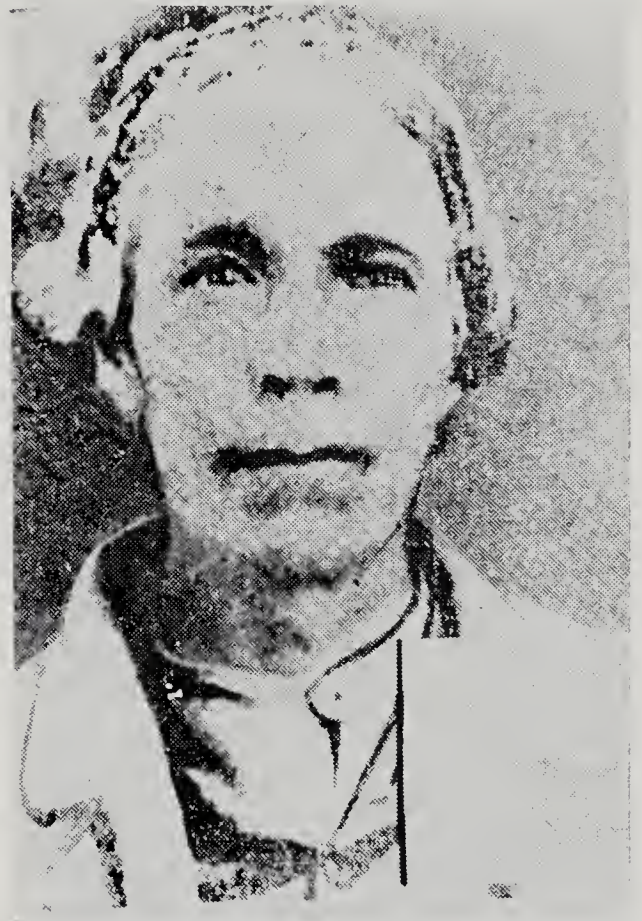
At one of the Indian villages later, Biggs was untied and told that he could move about freely as long as he didn't leave the village. He was given better clothing, plenty to eat, and comfortable living quarters. By appropriate ceremony, he was even adopted into the Kickapoo tribe. Undoubtedly, the Indians highly respected Biggs because of his size, remarkable strength, and endurance. The Indians greatly praised his sprinting speed, before capture, while so heavily clothed! His ability to "stay with them" on the 255 mile journey with very little food was also undoubtedly discussed. They had found out that this big white man was extremely tough.

The Indians continued this remarkable treatment by insisting that Biggs take an Indian wife! For several days, a "very fair and shapely" 18-year-old Indian squaw followed Biggs about or stood just outside of his living quarters. (The author believes that the Indians had visions of many future braves who

would be 6' 8'' tall and possess Biggs' other physical qualities.) However, Biggs remained faithful to his wife at La Belle Fontaine.

Biggs was at the Indian village for about three weeks when a French trader came to trade with the Indians. Biggs persuaded this trader to obtain his freedom by purchasing him from the Indians. With several other area traders' help, and after a little haggling, this was done. Biggs was free! Later, in Illinois, Biggs repaid these traders.

(William Biggs in about 1794.) From a distance of only 40 yards, the hail of Indian rifle fire riddled his horse and coat. Miraculously, however, he was not wounded. His over-all experience with the fierce Kickapoo Indians in 1788 must rank as one of the most spectacular in the annals of frontier America. As revealed in this article, Biggs later became very prominent in the early Illinois Territory. This photograph was reproduced from a portrait painting of Mr. Biggs and is a courtesy of the Illinois State Historical Society. His signature was obtained from micro filmed court records.



Later, in the letter written to his brother about his experience and how much the traders paid to obtain his freedom, Biggs wrote, "MY PRICE WAS 107 BUCKS OR DOLLARS." (When Biggs wrote this, he was referring to 107 male deerskins or buckskins. Although the Indians did not receive the actual skins, they received the equivalent in trade.)

The author believes that this written statement and the following theories are overwhelmingly conclusive evidence why we say bucks today instead of dollars. (By the way, Biggs' entire letter still exists today, and must be considered a historical treasure!) "Buckskin" was a valuable item to these early settlers because clothes and many other items could be made from it. A "Buck" was as valuable as a dollar to these early settlers because very little money was available in this era. Bucks were easily traded for other needed items such as tools, powder, guns, etc. If asked, trading post owners would undoubtedly frequently quote prices in bucks.

Therefore, sentences such as, "How many bucks do you want for that," have endured from frontier times until today. Obviously, more than 200 years ago a buck and a dollar became related because both were valuable items. One of the definitions of 'bucks' in Webster's Dictionary is "slang for a dollar." Thanks to historical items such as William Biggs' letter, we today know why.

Hey, friends, we gotta' get back to the beautiful, happy ending to this article! A few weeks after obtaining his freedom, Biggs found passage on a flatboat going down the Wabash River to Vincennes (Indiana). At Vincennes, a message was relayed overland to La Belle Fontaine that Biggs was alive,

well, and on his way home. Everyone was stunned by the message because they thought that Biggs was dead.

By flatboat, Biggs traveled to the Ohio River and then up the Mississippi to Kaskaskia. When he arrived at the Kaskaskia boat dock, his two brothers, George and Thomas, were waiting. They brought an extra horse and rifle. This must have been a joyous reunion. However, the best reunion was yet to come! Ten weeks after his capture, Biggs was once again home at La Belle Fontaine. He was back with his wife, Nancy, and children!

Mr. Glenn Zanders is holding 'a couple of bucks' at his fur and sporting goods company, which is located near Baldwin, Illinois. Mr. Zanders is the largest skin, root, firearms, and ammunition dealer in southern Illinois, and is one of the largest fur dealers. His firm is located only 19 miles from La Belle Fontaine. The price paid for deerskins today (January, 1982) was \$6.50 each.



Author's Notations of Further Research of William Biggs

Biggs became very prominent after his unbelievably spectacular experience. He was the first sheriff (1790-1798) of St. Clair County, Illinois Territory; was elected to two terms (1805-1809) in the legislature of the Indiana Territory; and was elected in 1812 as a member of the legislature or senate of the Illinois Territory. He also, for many years, was a judge of the Court of Common Pleas and a Justice of the Peace.

He also became a major landowner in southwestern Illinois, owning nearly 4,000 acres at one time. At the request of the Congress of the United States, Biggs went to Washington, D. C. in 1826 and gave a narration of his experiences with George Rogers Clark. His narration also included the 1788 Kickapoo Indian experience featured in this article. He received a standing ovation when finished and was later awarded three full sections of land by Congress.

When Illinois became a State in 1818, Biggs was narrowly defeated (by 42 votes) in his race to become a State Senator. This marked an end to his nearly 28 continuous years of service to the people of the Illinois Territory.

Biggs' last years of life were undoubtedly spent enjoying his children, grandchildren, and reminiscing about his very worthwhile life. He had to think many times, "I did it all and have no regrets." This distinguished American died in 1827, thirty-nine years after his freedom was purchased for 107 buck-

skins (in trade). Despite the assistance of a small army of searchers, the author was unable to locate the grave of William Biggs. Reportedly, the grave is located near "Peter's Station." which is near Southern Illinois University at Edwardsville, Illinois.

The author strongly believes that should his grave be located in the future, a large informative plaque, mounted on a large rock, should be placed by the grave of William Biggs. I respectfully request that historical societies from local, state and national levels remember this request. It is the least we current Americans can do for this distinguished, prominent, heroic patrioch of long ago.

Not wishing to "strand readers in the past," the author will conclude this article and "skyrocket" everyone back into the present with the following.



In addition to being born in 1977, these two young ladies have something else in common. Both are eighth generation direct descendants of William Biggs. Tracy Martin (left) lives in New Jersey and Jennifer Carr (right) lives in Illinois. The author sent a photograph of William Biggs to the mothers of these attractive girls, and was extremely pleased to have located the previously unknown painting. Undoubtedly, the photograph is now considered a treasure to these families. A stunning point to ponder is that had William Biggs been killed in the hail of Indian rifle fire in 1788, Jennifer and Tracy would not exist. They are descendants of William Biggs' daughter, who was born in 1795 -- seven years afterwards.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

As an amateur author, I must compliment the following people who, without exception, did everything possible to help me with this article. I thank each of them, for without their assistance this article would not be as complete as it is or may never have been written.

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2. Mr. Carl Baldwin, of Belleville, Illinois, and his book "Echoes of Their Voices," printed in 1978.
 3. The Illinois State Historical Society and Mary Michals, Curator of Prints and Photographs, Springfield, Illinois.
 4. Alfred Mueller, Marge Adams, the Monroe County Historical Society, and the Peterstown Heritage Society, Waterloo, Illinois.
 5. Mr. Glenn Zanders, Baldwin, Illinois.
 6. John and Mary Ellen Young, genealogists, and Kay Jetton, historian, of Marissa, Illinois.
 7. The book, "History of St. Clair County, Illinois." Originally printed in 1881, reprinted in 1977 with additions.
 8. The book, "The Making of Illinois," by Mather, printed in 1915.
 9. Mr. Thomas E. Maziarz, manager of the microfilm records department at the St. Clair County Courthouse in Belleville, Illinois. Mr. Biggs' signature was obtained from microfilmed court records, page 85, Aprill, 1811 term of court.
 10. Photography by Lovita Ingram, Percy, Illinois, and the Illinois State Historical Society.
 11. Sunrise Publishing Co., St. Louis, Missouri, and President Edith Wood for granting permission to use small parts of "Echoes of Their Voices," a copyrighted book.
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 14. The Madison County Genealogical Society, and Mary Jane Gass and Dan Theurer.
 15. Mrs. William Carr, LaGrange, Illinois, and Mrs. Ronald Martin, Pine Hills, New Jersey, and especially Mr. R. J. Flygare, Geneva, Illinois.
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DISPLAY CASES

The Illinois Numismatic Association has about 50 display cases which are in storage and have not been used for three or four years. We want them to be used, and the idea was put forth that they be put on loan to clubs throughout the state to be used by clubs in the area. It was also suggested that we sell the cases to clubs or members of IILNA. Nothing firm has been decided as yet. If you have a suggestion, write to the secretary.

If five cases could be put in your area coin club, someone would have to be responsible for them; but at least they could be used. One must take into consideration the possibility of damage, and storage is no small concern.

At least three people have mentioned they would like to buy cases; if there is enough interest in purchase this may be the route to go. ILLNA bought these cases at about \$25.00 and if sold, they would go at about that price. Let's hear from you concerning what should be done with these cases.

ILL. N. A. HONOR ROLL

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| | | |
|--------|--|-----------------------|
| 1967 — | PEORIA DISTRICT COIN CLUB | PEORIA, ILLINOIS |
| 1968 — | PEORIA DISTRICT COIN CLUB | PEORIA, ILLINOIS |
| 1970 — | TRI-CITIES COIN CLUB | MOLINE, ILLINOIS |
| 1971 — | CENTRAL ILLINOIS NUMISMATIC ASSN. | SPRINGFIELD, ILLINOIS |
| 1972 — | JACK D. HUGGINS | BELLEVILLE, ILLINOIS |
| 1973 — | JACK D. HUGGINS | BELLEVILLE, ILLINOIS |
| 1973 — | WILL COUNTY COIN CLUB | JOLIET, ILLINOIS |
| 1974 — | SOY CITY COIN CLUB | DECATUR, ILLINOIS |
| 1978 — | WILLIAM SALOW | CHILLICOTHE, ILLINOIS |
| 1979 — | WILLIAM SALOW | CHILLICOTHE, ILLINOIS |

CLUB - ONE HUNDRED — for those coin clubs who have contributed to ILL. N. A., through their effort and hard work in HOSTING the ILLINOIS NUMISMATIC ASSOCIATION STATE CONVENTION, since the inception of ILL. N. A. in 1959.

| | | |
|--------|--|-------------------|
| 1960 — | ROCKFORD AREA COIN CLUB | ROCKFORD |
| 1961 — | PEORIA DISTRICT COIN CLUB | PEORIA |
| 1962 — | TRI-CITIES COIN CLUB | MOLINE |
| 1963 — | LAND OF LINCOLN COIN CLUB, C. I. N. A. | SPRINGFIELD |
| 1964 — | MATTOON COIN CLUB | MATTOON |
| 1966 — | CENTRALIA COIN CLUB | CENTRALIA |
| 1967 — | STARVED ROCK COIN CLUB | LA SALLE |
| 1968 — | PEORIA DISTRICT COIN CLUB | PEORIA |
| 1969 — | CENTRALIA COIN CLUB | CENTRALIA |
| 1970 — | TRI-CITIES COIN CLUB | MOLINE |
| 1971 — | CENTRAL ILLINOIS NUMISMATIC ASSOCIATION | SPRINGFIELD |
| 1972 — | SOY CITY COIN CLUB | DECATUR |
| 1973 — | WILL COUNTY COIN CLUB | JOLIET |
| 1974 — | SOY CITY COIN CLUB | DECATUR |
| 1975 — | CENTRAL ILLINOIS NUMISMATIC ASSOCIATION | SPRINGFIELD |
| 1976 — | SOY CITY COIN CLUB | DECATUR |
| 1977 — | NORTHWEST SUBURBAN COIN CLUB | ARLINGTON HEIGHTS |

MEMBERSHIP HONOR ROLL — for those non-officers who have signed the most new members into ILL. N. A. for each year.

| | | |
|--------|---------------------------|------------|
| 1967 — | MARSHALL RAMAY | METROPOLIS |
| 1968 — | CLAYTON J. HAGEMANN | PLANO |
| 1969 — | JOHN C. HADLEY | CHAMPAIGN |
| 1970 — | PAUL J. SURJAN | JOLIET |
| 1971 — | JACK D. HUGGINS | BELLEVILLE |
| 1972 — | WILLIAM D. WILES | ELLIOT |
| 1973 — | DALE E. RICHESON | TUSCOLA |
| 1974 — | WILLIAM L. SALOW | KANKAKEE |
| 1975 — | RICHARD HARTZOG | ROCKFORD |
| 1976 — | RICHARD HARTZOG | ROCKFORD |
| 1977 — | RICHARD HARTZOG | ROCKFORD |
| 1978 — | FRANK ST. LOUIS | BRADLEY |
| 1978 — | RICHARD HARTZOG | ROCKFORD |

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SUBJECT TO THE CONSTITUTION AND BY-LAWS OF THE ASSOCIATION

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Mr.
Mrs.
Miss

Name (Please Print)

Address

.....
City

State

Zip Code

.....
Date and Birth Year

.....
Occupation

.....
Numismatic Specialty

.....
Signature of Applicant

.....
List local Coin Club you are a member of.

.....
Signature of Proposer

Check One Below:

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INDIVIDUAL APPLICATION ()

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